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PRACTICAL PHASES OF CARIBBEAN DOMINATION.

BY FREDERIC COURTLAND PENFIELD.

"Our nation has insisted that because of its primacy in strength among the nations of the western hemisphere it has certain duties and responsibilities which oblige it to take a leading part. . . . It is the firm purpose of the United States that its growth and influence and power shall redound, not to the harm, but to the benefit, of our sister republics, whose strength is less. Our growth, therefore, is beneficial to humankind in general."—President ROOSEVELT, in Chicago address, April 2d, 1903.

At the moment when the United States is preparing for the great work of creating the Isthmian canal, public attention is directed perforce to present and future conditions in Caribbean countries and in the islands of the West Indies, for perspicacity points to that region as pregnant with possibilities for American expansion—not for adding to our area, but for expansion of power requisite to canal control and helpful to trade extension.

Do we want the West Indies? is a question destined to be conspicuously before the American people in the not distant future; rapidity of national growth is certain to force it into prominence. Naval and army officials, civil engineers, and others whose duty takes them to our island possessions in the Antilles, claim that it is shaping into a theme of importance; first, because Europe will not always permit the United States merely to reap the benefits of the Monroe Doctrine; that so radical a measure carries responsibilities as well, is now generally admitted, and if we do not police the republics of Central and South America, Hayti and Santo Domingo, European Powers surely will. Secondly, American naval domination of the Caribbean Sea is essential to the control of the important artery of international commerce that we are to

construct, and that means a greatly augmented navy, whose most important field of activity will be the Caribbean.

It being accepted that lapse of time is destined to bring every island in the West Indies voluntarily under the fostering care of the Stars and Stripes, it is obviously permissible to discuss what measures are open to our government to honorably secure certain needed advantages before the ages bring the fulfilment of the "destiny" so long recognized by profound political writers.

A "World Power" now, the United States is impatient to play its part in the western world, a rôle that cannot be left to another to enact. How, then, may we secure the adjuncts essential to the needs of a mighty nation, bristling with twentieth-century initiative and impulses, while having for southern neighbors islands characterized by habits of the Middle Ages, and convulsive mainland countries as unprogressive as they were centuries ago?

Control of a great harbor in the Antilles, where we could establish an important naval station, with every modern ramification, would go far to secure to our government the means for effectively discharging responsibilities it has no mind to shirk. There is such a harbor, less than two hours' steaming distance from Porto Rico, which in our hands would be the key to a control over a vast area. For half a century, acquisition of this coign of vantage has been a subject of negotiation, off and on, between the Dominican government and Washington authorities. Great soldiers, gifted with foresight, have told our government that, sooner or later, we must control Samana Bay.

Captain (afterwards General) McClellan was sent in 1854 by the War Department to study the military advantages of the harbor, and his report was enthusiastically favorable. Under resolution of Congress, approved January 12th, 1871, President Grant sent three commissioners to inquire into the conditions and resources of Santo Domingo, with reference to its annexation by the United States. It was stated in and out of Congress that Samana Bay was the real object of the commission's inquiry. A great majority of the inhabitants of the island republic had asked the United States to annex Santo Domingo. The report of the commission was favorable to annexation, but Congress failed to take action on the report. We had not then embarked on the possession of island colonies, our navy was small, and possibly

there were grounds for suspecting that there was a "job" behind the proposal to Uncle Sam to annex a negro republic, whose people spoke another language.

In 1874, Samana Bay was formally ceded to a private corporation formed in the United States, but a year later all rights of the company lapsed because of non-payment of rent.

Considered strategically, commercially, or from any point of view, Samana Bay is the most advantageous position in the West Indies, experts are agreed. It is thirty miles long by about ten wide, and is capable of accommodating the largest fleets and ships of the greatest depth; it is well sheltered against all winds, especially those from the north and northeast, which are the most prevalent, by the Samana peninsula. The entrance to the bay is somewhat narrow, as if planned by nature for a national stronghold, but is free from rocks and shoals. Samana Bay commands the most important avenue from the Atlantic to the Caribbean. When the canal is completed, the world's shipping will constantly pass the coast of Santo Domingo, and the Mona Passage will be employed probably by half the traffic passing to and from European ports.

Naval men and soldiers having intimate acquaintance with Samana Bay, state that it could be readily adapted to the uses of a naval station which would eclipse in strength and importance those of Great Britain at Bermuda, St. Lucia and Barbados, and of France at Fort de France, combined. An American commission, including officers of the army and navy, should have little difficulty in securing to the United States upon equitable terms this Santo Domingo harbor, by means of which, with outlying coaling stations and neighboring harbors under the Stars and Stripes, the Caribbean might be transformed into the equivalent of an American lake.

The United States cannot always remain blind to conditions in Hayti and Santo Domingo, however—conditions at times too horrible to be tolerated. The application of enough force to restore order in both divisions of the island may at any moment be demanded. The tone of the European press some months ago, when a German cruiser destroyed a rebel Haytian gunboat that had despoiled a German merchant of a supply of arms, emphasized European amazement that Uncle Sam permitted disorders almost perennial in his island neighbor.

There are also cogent reasons why we should have the Danish islands. Combined with the United States West Indies—strange phrase, this—their possession would extend our control to everything worth owning in the Virgin group, where our flag floats over Porto Rico, Culebra, Mona, and Vieques, and in case of war give us practical domination of the Virgin channel, a much used highway between the Atlantic and the Caribbean. Culebra being already a naval base of our government, with the proprietorship of St. Thomas harbor on the east and of Porto Rican harbors on the west, our forces would be ideally placed for maintaining control over a considerable expanse. For simplicity and inexpensiveness of administration, the Danish islands might be included in the governorship of Porto Rico.

When the Danish upper house defeated the treaty transferring the islands of St. Thomas, St. Croix and St. John to the United States, the matter was not permanently settled, apparently, for many Danish commercial men tell us that the subject will be called up afresh within a few years, when cession to America will most likely be voted. The news of the defeat of the treaty by a tie vote was received in the islands as sad information; business there has been paralyzed ever since, and hundreds of residents in their discouragement have emigrated to Europe or to the United States.

The industry of St. Croix being sugar-producing, and a considerable part of the island being owned by Americans, the sentiment for annexation is nearly unanimous. In St. Thomas, almost every one interested in trade is praying for transfer of the group to the Stars and Stripes. Sparsely settled, and having little traffic with the outer world, St. John may be indifferent to the issue. In St. Thomas and St. Croix, many representatives of old Danish families, some being functionaries of the government, openly favor transfer to the United States. Until an imperative order was issued a few months since against the practice, American flags protruded from hundreds of windows in Frederikstadt and Christianstadt.

It is explained that the pride of the Danish royal family, which through its members is connected with every European court, was responsible for the defeat of the treaty. King Christian's family brought every influence, sentimental, social and political, to bear upon the issue. It is readily understood that there can be no

more unpopular incident in a sovereign's reign than contraction of national domain, for monarchs are born expansionists. Prince Waldemar sent even moribund legislators to the Landsting to vote against the treaty. The real sufferers from Waldemar's activity were the islanders, for Denmark has neither the capital nor the prestige to develop fully the resources of the islands.

A foolish rumor found publicity, here and abroad, that the German Emperor caused the defeat of the Danish treaty. If the northern kingdom should ever become a part of Germany, it was said, the Emperor would achieve one of the controlling ambitions of his life—the securing of insular possessions, with coaling stations, in this hemisphere. If the war-lord of Germany gave the subject a thought, his intuition must have told him there could be no speedier way of precipitating a conflict with Uncle Sam. In all likelihood he paid not the slightest heed to the Danish-American negotiations. It is known in every Foreign Office in the Old World that the United States in Clay's time—before the Monroe Doctrine was clothed with its present force—*informed* Spain that she must not transfer Cuba to any European Power; and that Holland was later advised that Curaçao must not be the subject of negotiation with European governments.

Not infrequently we read of Bismarck's "stupendous blunder," when he forced France to relinquish Alsace and Lorraine to Germany, instead of taking Martinique and Guadeloupe, on this side of the globe, with their harbors adaptable to naval and military bases. One has to investigate but briefly to learn why Bismarck did not seek to change the nationality of West Indian islands. Diplomatic astuteness was a Bismarckian characteristic.

Five million dollars is a very modest price for the Danish islands, when it is recognized that they would form a link in the chain of defences of the canal. Military opinion is to the effect that St. Thomas would be more valuable in this connection than Porto Rico. A moderate expenditure would double the size of St. Thomas harbor and place its usefulness before that of San Juan in Porto Rico. Primarily, it is the harbor of St. Thomas that we want from Denmark; but under our rule the success of Porto Rico could be reproduced in each of the islands.

The purchase of the Danish group would eliminate voluntarily a European Power from this hemisphere, leaving Great Britain, France and Holland in possession of Western World territory; and

fate will doubtless decree that we shall have them for friendly neighbors for a considerable period; but the passing of time will bring every West Indian island, not governing itself, to the great American republic. Portugal and Spain once were potent factors on this side of the Atlantic, let it be remembered. In a message to Congress in 1870 President Grant said:

"The time is probably not far distant when, in the natural course of events, the European political connection with this continent will cease."

Hamilton Fish, as Secretary of State, in a communication to Congress, likewise in 1870, went further, and said:

"The policy announced by Monroe looks hopefully to the time when, by the voluntary departure of European governments from this continent and adjacent islands, America shall be wholly American."

In this connection it is interesting to study the list of West-Indian islands (Bermudas not included), unimportant islets being omitted, belonging to European powers:

British:	Danish:
Jamaica.	St. Croix.
Turks and Caicos groups.	St. Thomas.
Bahamas.	St. John.
Antigua.	French:
Montserrat.	Martinique.
Nevis.	Guadaloupe.
St. Christopher.	Deseada.
Dominica.	Maria Galanta.
Virgin and Cayman groups.	Les Saintes.
Grenada.	St. Bartholomew.
St. Vincent.	Dutch:
St. Lucia.	St. Eustatius.
Barbados.	Saba.
Trinidad and Tobago.	Bonaire.
French and Dutch jointly:	Curacao.
St. Martin.	Aruba.

Nearly all these islands with historical names are charges upon the treasuries of home countries, their aggregate yearly deficit being considerable. Were they branch establishments of a prudently managed commercial undertaking, they would long since have been abandoned as the penalty of being unable to pay their way. But being over-sea appanages of European governments, failure to be self-supporting becomes merely an incident in a scheme of national administration, at times possibly forcing explanations from the ministry, but soon forgotten.

Collapse in the sugar industry has changed the condition of affairs in the islands, from showing a bountiful profit to a yearly deficit. Extended production of cane in many parts of the world, the amazing development of beet-sugar cultivation in the United States and in Europe, and the bounty system of Germany, have transformed the West-Indian planter from nabob to pauper. He used to be absent from his plantations because he preferred living in a Scotch castle or a château in France, leaving agents to look after his insular interests; if he is now absent, sorry to say, it is most likely because he dreads facing his creditors. The decay of the sugar industry is a gloomy chapter in West-Indian history. Perceiving its approach, Trinidad found a substitute crop to some extent in cacao. In some of the British islands it is hoped that sisal hemp may bring the means of subsistence; and here and there various makeshift crops are being tried with the object of staving off commercial ruin. Jamaica is finding encouragement in the trade in bananas with the United States; but an unfriendly line in a new tariff bill would strangle the industry. Business stagnation breeds discontent among natives, and as a panacea they pray for Uncle Sam to come to their islands. The United States has not suffered by the penetration to every island village of the news of Porto Rican prosperity.

French statesmen feel that they can afford to keep their islands going by drafts on the home exchequer for the renown of *La Belle France*, if for no other reason. Some of these statesmen regard their naval base at Fort de France to be worth a dozen times the annual cost of maintaining the islands. Great Britain hopes against hope each year that improvement may come in the sugar industry, or that an experimental crop may "catch on"—and thinks of the profit when raw sugar was worth five pence a pound.

Last year the revenue of the several British West-Indian administrations was \$167,000 less than expenditures, and imports exceeded exports by \$1,404,000. The preponderating bulk of trade is not with England, but with the United States, for this country purchased exports of the islands to the amount of £4,581,964, as against exports to Great Britain of the value of £1,839,479. Practically everything consumed by the British West-Indian, not home grown, is imported from the States. To dominate the trade of the islands—which we already do—is all that

commercial America should at present aspire to. We can never voluntarily admit their sugar without duty, nor seek to take their black inhabitants into our political family. The harbors of some of the British islands, with coaling station advantages, might find a place in the scheme of American expansion, but are not essential.

Strategists are positive that, with a great naval depot on Samana Bay, possession of St. Thomas harbor, the Porto Rican harbors, Culebra, and the coaling stations at Bahia Honda and Guantanamo in Cuba, the strategical advantage of the United States in defending the main approaches to the Caribbean, the Gulf of Mexico, and the Panama Canal, in case of war, would be well-nigh perfect. The Windward and Mona channels, leading to the Caribbean, as well as the St. Nicholas and Yucatan channels, leading to the Gulf, could then be patrolled and defended in a manner which would make it extremely difficult for a half-spent European fleet to penetrate our cordon.

Completion of the ramifications requisite for this vast cordon, ranging from the Virgin passage to the westernmost tip of Cuba, a distance of twelve hundred miles, seems more than feasible. A reasonable amount of cash would doubtless secure from the Santo Dominicans a long lease with jurisdiction over Samana Bay. The great harbor can be turned into a productive asset only by assigning its use to Uncle Sam. The Danish negotiation is regarded by few as permanently ended.

It is not alone the repelling of European fleets, or the ability to repel them, that should guide the American government in rounding out its sphere of power to the southward, but the ability to exercise beneficent rule over the Caribbean Sea and its islands and mainland coasts. To be prepared is ever prudent; but let us hope that our guns may never again be directed against a European foe. The immediate concern of Uncle Sam is so to perfect his resources and West-Indian footholds that he may forever defend the approaches to the canal, exert a control over Hayti, Santo Domingo, the Central-American republics, and those of South America bordering on the Caribbean, amounting to the policing of them, by compelling reasonable order in all. If we neglect this duty, other nations may insist on performing it—and then the Monroe Doctrine would draw the United States into serious strife. Roystering of revolutionists along the Spanish

Main, and elsewhere in the Caribbean zone, must be stopped. A canal open to universal use, but owned by the United States government, makes this obligatory. Our government could probably bring about a state of peace without recourse to force that in time would become chronic.

Within a year and a half at least six of our southern neighbors have had serious revolutions on hand, and our war-ships have been hurried from one storm centre to another to exert a pacifying influence, to guard traffic, or to protect American consulates and commercial interests.

We must not permit Latin-American adventurers and dictators to look upon the Monroe Doctrine as a cloak for specious dealings with Europeans, but make it plain that the United States government will not stand between them and the penalties which their misconduct invites. The United States cannot expect European governments to respect the Monroe Doctrine unless we are prepared to play the part of policeman and keep some sort of order in near-by Latin-American states.

Humane conditions in the island which is politically divided into Hayti and Santo Domingo cannot forever be overlooked by the United States. Santo Domingo is the nearest neighbor of our model Porto Rico, and Hayti is separated from our Cuban wards by but a few miles of water.

These black republics probably represent the lowest civilization to be found in our hemisphere.

Our concern in the welfare of the Cubans left nothing wanting. But here is an island, almost within cannon-shot of United States soil, where moral conditions are worse than they were in Cuba, where bloodshed is almost constant, where political power is wielded largely by fetich priests and voodoo worshippers. Cannibalism is there, too, associated with what pretends to be a religious observance. Misrule, waste and rapine dominate this island neighbor, fertile and beautiful enough to amaze the visitor. If a European government went to Hayti or Santo Domingo and fired a shot, Uncle Sam would be there in a jiffy prepared to enforce the Monroe Doctrine. But no outsider is going to interfere in these independent republics, for foreign Powers cannot be made to take a benevolent interest in an island where the Doctrine warns them to observe the rule of "hands off." Sooner or later, Uncle Sam must perform the Christian task of pointing

to these the way to better government. To a great people schooled in dealing with problems of the negro race, the task should not be difficult. How it is to be accomplished is more than a layman can say; but the strong have ever been able to incline the weak without resort to force; and moral suasion has not lost its potency. The Washington administration, supported by a few candid utterances of Congress, might devise means that would influence the conduct of native leaders in the island, to the extent of making peaceful industry more popular than it now is. It would not be unbecoming were the United States to give the islanders administrative assistance, making it clear that improvement in insular affairs must follow. Samana Bay, leased or ceded to the American government, and active with the adjuncts of a naval station, would unquestionably exert an influence for good that would extend to the Haytian division of the island.

An overwhelming body of conservative Americans want to see the United States remain pre-eminent as a trading nation. To them the possession of an invincible fleet promises commercial prowess only. It is an irony of fate that this prowess cannot be wholly based upon ability to produce commodities well and cheaply. The cardinal purpose of the Panama Canal is the furtherance of American trade, the creation of new markets for our products. Facility in transferring war-ships from one ocean to another is but an incident in the scheme; but the war-vessel and the sailor and the soldier in these modern days must be the forerunners of trade outside our own territory. There are writers in our land who have always pronounced as fantastic the association of sea-power with the securing of foreign markets. But Great Britain, generations since, proved that trade follows the flag, and Germany is a firm believer in the principle. The Isthmian canal will make the United States the trade arbiter of the world.

And the measure to result from dominion over the Caribbean, aside from its moral benefits, can be nothing but exploitation of trade. The time was never so propitious for establishing closer relations with Central and South America. Our keenest business competitors, England and Germany, have lost their prestige throughout Spanish America, while our influence was never greater. Bullying tactics in the Venezuelan imbroglio alienated many friendships; whether England and Germany were justi-

fied in their acts is immaterial to the question. The trade of all Latin-America can readily be secured by United States manufacturers and merchants, and retained indefinitely. German goods never had high standing in South America; now they are almost boycotted. British products, while better regarded, have a waning sale.

President Roosevelt's reiteration that the United States will permit no European Power to adopt measures that would result in giving it control in a South or Central-American country, is a qualification of the Monroe Doctrine second only to the vigorous pronouncement of President Cleveland. Consequently, the time is opportune for securing markets in the southern republics. Secretary Blaine knew how valuable they would be to our manufacturers; and Senator Cullom has voiced a volume of Congressional sentiment in the same direction by his statements in the Senate. Our trade in Caribbean islands and countries is gradually increasing, but persistent and systematic work for a few years would bring a doubled reward. When the canal is completed, the trade of the rich west coast of South America may be wrested from European nations. We get small share of it now.

We want the trade of South America, though political control over a foot of its soil is never to be thought of; and when secured, we should give it such vigilant attention as to make it next to hopeless for rivals to again dispute the field with us. The situation is, to a great extent, one of example and confidence; when Latin-American countries are convinced of our wish to bring about a better understanding of commercial conditions and relations, and we send honorable business agents to them, rather than irresponsible harpies, we shall not find them unresponsive. This understanding reached, based upon confidence, American money would gladly develop Latin-American railroads and other forms of communication, mines and agricultural resources—and banks admitting of transactions independent of London, Paris and Hamburg. The latent resources of Venezuela and Colombia alone are, doubtless, sufficient to satisfy any reasonable appetite that northern capital may have for over-sea adventure.

Let the United States shine resplendent as a "World Power" by leading in commerce, and thus give the phrase a meaning characteristically American!

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